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## **An Old or a New Europe?**

A Sketch on the Philosophy Underlying Polish  
Policy in Europe

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In recent years, a number of prominent politicians have tried to animate the debate on the future of Europe, and to impart to it their own particular character. Joschka Fischer, Jacques Chirac, Tony Blair and others have been trying to outdo one another at making new, bold declarations and proposals, sketching out various ambitious visions of the future political shape of a united Europe in front of the European audience. And yet none of them have succeeded at sparking off as animated a debate on European identity in Europe as US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. At the outset of the Iraq crisis, he offered, rather offhandedly, his opinion on 'the old' and 'the new' Europe, including chiefly Germany and France, opposed to President Bush's policy, in the former. As for Poland, he elevated it by including it in 'the new Europe'. He said that the European 'centre of gravity was shifting to the East'<sup>1</sup>. One has to admit that for a politician whose way of thinking is quite straightforward and rather distant from any intellectual finesse, to provoke ferment in Europe on such a scale by a single statement is quite an impressive achievement. Apparently, in his statement Rumsfeld touched upon some particularly sensitive spot of contemporary, uniting Europe, a kind of tectonic fault line between the old and the new European Union members. This division need not necessarily overlap with the old division into Western and Eastern Europe: it is, rather, a division into the founding six and all those who joined it later. The matter is quite sensitive and concerns the decreasing capital of trust and growing alienation in Europe. This is what makes it so exciting. Shortly after Rumsfeld's statement, some official from the German government press office in Berlin hung up a large banner reading: 'Welcome to the old Europe!' in his office window, looking out directly on a railway track along which a train from Warsaw to West Berlin travels daily.

### **Archimedes's Fulcrum**

Today, nobody could imagine the European Union without France or Germany. There is no doubt that without the major redefinition of French policy vis-à-vis Germany in the first few years after the war, associated in the first place with the person of Robert Schuman, European integration would not have started at all. For, as Joschka Fischer observed,

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<sup>1</sup> *Marines nad Wisłą?* (The Marines on the Banks of the Vistula?), Rzeczpospolita, 31.01.2003.

this change in France's perception of Germany was not merely a momentary departure from its earlier policy vis-à-vis the eastern neighbour, dictated by some short-term calculation. It brought about something absolutely new, a qualitative change whereby 'the rejection of the balance of power principle and of that striving towards hegemony by individual states that emerged following the 1648 Peace of Westphalia--and replacing it with a close relationship based on their vital interests and the transfer of sovereignty to supranational European institutions'<sup>2</sup> became the essence of thinking about Europe.

What strikes one when reading Robert Schuman's writings today is a very strong tone of distrust of the Germans and Germany, a constantly recurring fear of *furor teutonicus*. For Schuman's views on the German national character were actually quite schematic and founded on widespread stereotypes of the kind: 'The German likes discipline and obedience'<sup>3</sup>. It is surprising, therefore, what practical conclusions Schuman arrives at on the future policy vis-à-vis Germany after the Second World War. He recalls years later that when he and his associates formulated and presented the first European policy guidelines after the war, all those involved were convinced that understanding and cooperation between Germany and France were the central problem for Europe, that it would be impossible to build a Europe without Germany, as without France<sup>4</sup>. Undoubtedly, some French politicians were inclined to accept that conclusion for very different reasons: the growing threat from the Eastern bloc being consolidated by Moscow, the extension of a security umbrella over Western Europe by the United States, as well as escaping from one's own, not always glorious, wartime past, and, finally, the hope for permanent French control over its 'eternal enemy', now defeated and bled dry. Characteristically, predicting that Germany would persistently seek reunification after the war, Schuman observed in the context of his plan for a new European constellation that the French could be certain that they would not find themselves faced, against their will, with a *fait accompli*. They were sure they would be able to defend their interests, because reunification would not be achieved without the

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<sup>2</sup> Joschka Fischer, *Quo vadis, Europa?* (Quo vadis, Europe?) in: *O przyszłości Europy* (On the Future of Europe), Warsaw 2000, p.27.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Schuman, *Dla Europy* (For Europe), transl. Magdalena Krzeptowska, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2003, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 56.

consent of France.<sup>5</sup> The impression one may get is that with time French policy extended that credo to cover European integration as well, in which it has consistently sought to keep the 'controlling interest'.

Early in 2003, Germany and France celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Elysee Treaty. The treaty, initiated by Adenauer and de Gaulle, was intended to cement the new character of the Franco-German relationship in Europe. A few decades after those events Brigitte Sauzay, summing up the state of relations between the two countries of key importance to the EU concluded that Franco-German cooperation had transformed itself into a new post-national quality. In her opinion, the initial dialogue between the two governments has turned into a dialogue between the two peoples, in which 'there are no more taboos, and differences of opinion are discussed openly'. This generates that special sense of confidence and closeness. In Sauzay's opinion, the qualitative change personified by the Franco-German relationship has become to European integration, and to Europe as a whole, 'a method, a modus, a regulating mechanism for the external challenges to our countries. This is becoming topical particularly in the context of EU enlargement to the east, when a Europe of 25 countries will certainly not be spared crises and blockades. The German-French dialogue may serve here, as in the past, as a model for seeking compromise.'<sup>6</sup> According to Sauzay, the uniqueness of the Franco-German relationship to Europe consists in the fact that it first made it possible to overcome the dangerous past, and now makes it possible to overcome the uncertain future.

This belief in the absolutely unique and special character of the Franco-German relationship allows one to view it as a kind of model for Europe as a whole, a standard the others should bring themselves up to in due time. If only all the EU member states and all of Europe's countries followed down this road, all the problems faced by the continent would probably be solved. Therefore, Egon Bahr may write that '[t]he way--the only one, perhaps--out of the labyrinth of the European problem would perhaps be found if Germany and France agreed their positions on the issue [of the future of Europe]. If both these countries agreed on the nature and objectives of the European Union, it

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<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Brigitte Sauzay, *Deutschland – Frankreich: Die Herausforderungen für die gemeinsame Zukunft*, 'Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte', B 3-4/2003, p. 4.

might provide Archimedes's fulcrum... Has not the historical moment arrived to create European sovereignty?'<sup>7</sup>. France and Germany as Archimedes's fulcrum for Europe: to understand fully the import of this metaphor, one needs to recall the words of Archimedes, who said: 'Give me a fulcrum on which to rest and I will move the Earth'. Here, it is Europe that is to be moved.

This idea found its expression in a special report drawn up by the German and French foreign ministries in the years 1998-2000<sup>8</sup>, and in the conceptions presented by special coordinators for German-French relations, Rudolf von Thadden and André Bord (30 July 2002). One of the principles mentioned there is: building Europe on the foundation of German-French partnership that retains its special importance<sup>9</sup>. Feverish speculations have been ongoing for some time, especially after the negative experience of Nice, as to whether this partnership actually continues. The partnership has definitely been shaken by various crises and misunderstandings. And yet, in one basic respect at least, it seems to continue to function: at the times of major crises and threats, whether internal ones, posed by the European integration process, or those coming from outside the EU, at the times of some grave uncertainty, Germany and France generally close ranks and integrate, rather than take places on two sides of a barricade. They turn towards each other rather than turn their backs on each other. At such times there occurs, as Henri de Bresson described it, 'a renewal of the old vows' that lay at the foundation of European integration.

### **A Core Europe**

The debate on the establishment of a pioneer group of European integration, a 'core' or enhanced cooperation, is a reflection of that closing of ranks by France and Germany whenever faced with a crisis or a threat. It has kept recurring periodically like a boomerang, chiefly at the times of tensions between the 'old' and the 'newer' EU members over the proposed amendments to the Treaties. It has been a kind of pressure exerted on what are called 'reluctant integrationists', disobedient EU members. It is

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<sup>7</sup> Egon Bahr, *Deutsche Interessen*, 2000, I am quoting after Henri de Bresson: *Nowe Niemcy* (A New Germany), transl. Wiktor Dłuski, Warsaw 2003, p. 164.

<sup>8</sup> *Ein Europa mit dreißig und mehr Mitgliedern*, a joint Franco-German study, November 1998 – December 2000. Auswärtiges Amt, Planungsstab, Centre d'analyse et de prevision.

<sup>9</sup> Peter A. Zervakis/Sébastien von Gossler, *40 Jahre Elysée-Vertrag: Hat das deutsch-französische Tandem noch eine Zukunft?*, 'Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte', B 3-4/2003, p. 6.

therefore not by accident that in today's reflection on the future of the European Union by Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida--being a reaction to the European crisis caused by the US intervention in Iraq and the support lent to it by some European countries--again the need is pointed out to build an EU pioneer group around France and Germany<sup>10</sup> in order to overcome the crisis.

What we have in mind when speaking of a pioneer group is 'the avant-garde flexibility, i.e. the fact that a certain group of countries--most often involving what is called the 'engine' of integration, i.e. France and Germany--takes part in all the far-reaching cooperation projects. There are many varieties of the flexibility of the model referred to as an avant-garde model... [They] assume the existence of some group (avant-garde) determining the direction and areas of integration, followed by the others according to their possibilities'<sup>11</sup>. The core of European integration thus conceived: as a European strategy of the Franco-German relationship, found its conceptual justification and description in the 1994 proposal by two German CDU/CSU politicians, Karl Lamers and Wolfgang Schäuble. The memorandum of the two politicians was intended as a kind of pressure on the French partner, given a possible fiasco of negotiations within the Intergovernmental Conference scheduled for 1996. What attracted attention was a determined--even regarded as 'brutal' by some--appeal to France to take a firm stance in favour of deepened integration<sup>12</sup>. The essence of the project was to construct a 'European core' with a federal system and a clear division of powers subject to the subsidiarity principle. This specific Union within the Union was to comprise Germany and France as well as the Benelux countries. To a limited extent, these demands were reflected in the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam, in the form of what are known as 'enabling clauses' (Articles 43-45 TEU). They enable, in certain conditions, a group of willing member states to deepen integration in specific areas<sup>13</sup>. The debate on a European core flared up again in the context of the accession negotiations with the

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<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, *Unsere Erneuerung*, FAZ 31.05.2003, see also a discussion on the paper, including Peter Esterhazy, *Wir Störenfriede*, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 11.06.2003, R Dahrendorf/ T. Garton Ash, *Die Erneuerung Europas*, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 05.07.2003; in Poland see Marek A. Cichocki, *Ci wspaniali rdzenni Europejczycy* (Those Wonderful Core Europeans), Rzeczpospolita, 12.07.2003, Joachim Trenkner, *My, Europejczycy?* (We, Europeans?), Tygodnik Powszechny, 27.07.2003.

<sup>11</sup> Leszek Jesień, *Wybór czy inercja* (A Choice or Inertia?), Nowy Sącz 2000, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Fabrice Fries, *Spór o Europę* (The Dispute on Europe), PWN, Warszawa 1998, p. 489.

Central and Eastern European candidates opened in 1997, and the new IGC at Nice. It was then, in 2000, that Joschka Fischer, Jacques Delors, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Helmut Schmidt and Jacques Chirac<sup>14</sup> began once again to refer in public to an enhanced cooperation mechanism and a European core as the only efficient method of resolving potential internal crises that the EU will inevitably face when enlarged to include 25-27 members. Speculations even began to appear about a possibility of institutionalising cooperation of this kind outside the EU structures, if the other member states wanted to prevent it at any cost. As regards increasing the EU's flexibility and opening a wider road to applying the enabling clauses, the draft Constitutional Treaty worked out by the Convention means a marked progress. The clause of withdrawal from the EU included in the draft should be seen in this context, too. It is, actually, not only a safety valve of state sovereignty, but may also make it possible to get rid of a particularly defiant EU member who would like to completely block the way for those boldest and most determined in deepening integration. Accordingly, the problem with the core idea is that if it remains merely a threat, never carried out, it may actually discipline the participants of the integration project. If, however, it is carried out, it may also lead to promoting some form of political hegemony, narrow down the basis for compromise, upset the balance of power and, consequently, destroy the entire integration mechanism. The declarations to the effect that the core does remain, after all, a structure open to the other ones, are irrelevant here. As Peter Esterhazy aptly put it: what follows from the fact that, as French and German politicians assure us, the door of the train called European avant-garde is always open to those willing, and one may board it at any time, if the rails were laid down earlier, heading in a definite and indisputable direction?<sup>15</sup>.

### **To Weight or to Equalise?**

The proposals that appeared unofficially in the work of the European Convention as early as October 2002, and were officially put forward in May 2003, may be regarded as an important element of the tendency towards increasing the EU's flexibility described

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<sup>13</sup> See Alexander Stubb, *Dealing with Flexibility in the IGC*, in: Edward Best, Mark Gray, Alexander Stubb, *Rethinking the European Union*, Maastricht 2000, p. 148.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *O Przyszłości Europy*, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> *Wir Störenfriede*, op. cit.

above. They concern changes to the decision-making mechanism within the Council. These proposals, put forward by Giscard d'Estaing, meet the earlier (chiefly German) demands concerning: (i) a simplification of the decision-making system; (ii) its accommodation to the population criterion. Therefore, the proposal gained a broader and, on certain issues, further-reaching support from a group of Convention members on 16 January 2003. We read in it that 'it comprises an indispensable reform package if the enlarged Union is to be more simple, efficient, effective, transparent and, above all, democratic'. One may say that it is basically a Franco-German proposal intended to considerably democratise the EU, i.e. to largely redefine the present philosophy of European integration. Point 3 of the proposal of 16 January 2003 provides that 'qualified majority voting should be determined as a majority of member states representing a majority of the population of the Union'. In the draft Constitutional Treaty, Article 24, point 1, we read that when the Council takes decisions by qualified majority, 'such a majority shall consist of the majority of Member States, representing at least three fifths of the population of the Union'. The essence of these changes is not only accounting for the population aspect, as proposed in the draft Constitutional Treaty (a qualified majority should represent 60 per cent of the population of the EU)--a modification already present in the Treaty of Nice, incidentally--but, above all, the abandonment of the principle of weighting of votes redefined in Nice for a Union of 27 states. The critics of that arrangement point out that such a change would bring the Union 'a considerable and unclear shift in its power system in favour of the large states'<sup>16</sup>. For actually the abandonment of the weighting of votes--though apparently solving the Franco-German dilemma of maintaining parity between the two countries despite the difference in the population potential between France and the united Germany, a dilemma that has been growing ever since Nice--introduces a completely different philosophy to the integration process: it replaces the balancing principle by the equality principle.

Slightly simplifying the matter, one may say that, as European integration has thus far generally represented an attempt at balancing the intergovernmental principle against the Community principle, so in the decision-making mechanism, it has represented an attempt at balancing the federalist method, based on the weighting of votes and seeking

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<sup>16</sup> *Strittige Machtverteilung*, FAZ, 20.08.03, on the basis of an analysis of the Wiener Institut für Höhere Studien.



balance between the member states varying in size and importance, against the democratic method, based on the principle of equality (one state=one vote). The first method serves the balancing and the building of formal foundations for confidence between the unequal elements the Union is composed of. The second one produces a mechanism whereby a majority and a minority polarise in the decision-making process. The first one makes it necessary to broaden the field for possible consensus, while the other one broadens the field of the political game and competition. Worth recalling is the fact that throughout history most of the internally diversified political structures have been based on various ways of reconciling of these two different methods used to maintain unity in the decision-making process. On the scale of reconciling of these two methods, one extreme is the adoption of unanimity as the sole decision-making principle, while the other extreme is the adoption of the one entity=one vote principle and of a 50%+1 majority. Therefore, the proposed provision in the draft Constitutional Treaty represents not merely a 'fundamental shift in the EU's power system', but, rather, a fundamental shift in the philosophy of European integration.

The critics of the present vote-weighting mechanism point out its lack of transparency, undemocratic and complex character and low efficiency that would become especially burdensome in the case of a considerable EU enlargement. In the whole debate on the change in the EU decision-making mechanism one has, however, to bear in mind that: firstly, the recommendation that 'each and every citizen must be able to understand how Europe works and what its responsibilities are'<sup>17</sup> is an unrealistic--not to say a demagogic--argument that should not be used as a justification for simplifying the decision-making mechanism. Secondly, a certain level of complexity of the decision-making mechanism within an internally diversified structure is inevitable, and from the point of view of the unity of that structure, the confidence-generating balancing principle is no less important than the principle of democratic equality. This is especially important in a situation when the EU becomes even more diversified upon enlargement. Thirdly, one has to answer the question what better serves its unity in the situation of increased EU diversity: the broadening of the field for consensus (even at the expense of

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<sup>17</sup> Dominique de Villpein, Speech on Europe by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marseilles, 2 December 2002.

temporarily weakening its decision-making efficiency), or the broadening of the field of the political game. In other words, we may have to do here with a situation analogous to that when a bus driver suddenly steps on the gas as new passengers are boarding the bus.

>From the point of view of the EU as a whole, the basic issue for a few years to come seems to be the political absorption of the enlargement in a way that will neither seriously weaken the efficiency of the entire EU institutional system<sup>18</sup>, nor seriously affect this unity. This would make it necessary, however, to further seek a balance between balancing and equalisation in the decision-making process. Is this general interest identical with the interest of the Franco-German tandem, however? It is difficult to ignore the fact that the proposal for a new decision-making mechanism in the Council contained in the draft Constitutional Treaty is a common Franco-German solution, at which both countries had arrived gradually and not without pain. What was decisive for the new proposal was the negative experience of Nice (the experience that for the acceding countries had a completely different, positive meaning<sup>19</sup>) that needed to be radically overcome. What had lain at the basis of the Franco-German alliance within the integration structures from the very beginning was a dogma on the equality of the two states in the political sense. However, after the reunification of Germany this equality seemed an inadequate solution in the new realities, if only in view of Germany's population potential. At least some adjustments to it were necessary, that were decided already in Maastricht, when François Mitterrand agreed to the united Germany having 12 more seats in the European Parliament than the other large member states: France, Britain and Italy. With time, however, Germany began to put forward the population argument ever more boldly, and this boldness seemed only to bear out the French fears of the united Germany acting too boldly in Europe. French politicians regarded the row that broke out in Nice over the weighting of votes in the Council simply as Berlin's retaliation. In the negotiations on the votes within the Council, France, presiding over the EU, got completely confused, defending the Franco-German parity at all costs (regardless of the 22-million difference in population between the two states) on the one

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the Polish government's assessment of the results of Nice: *The Treaty of Nice – The Polish Point of View*, Warsaw, 15. Feb. 2001, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

hand, and denying analogous parity with Spain to Poland at the same time. Therefore, it was all the easier for Germany to play the role of Poland's advocate, as opposed to France<sup>20</sup>. Consequently, a compromise was reached, maintaining parity between France and Germany, and adding a principle that a qualified majority represents 62 per cent of the entire EU population. The present proposal is a decisive step towards meeting the German demands, a step that France decided to take mainly to maintain control over Germany and the EU in the face of the forthcoming enlargement. As Giscard d'Estaing admitted: 'Vis-à-vis Germany, France will lose, too. It is a problem for all. We are moving on towards a different, more democratic system... The influence on the decision-making in the EU Council that we gained in Nice is the same as the German influence. In the new state of affairs, this will no longer be the case. Nonetheless, we do accept this arrangement'<sup>21</sup>.

### **A New Political Constellation?**

The proposal for changing the decision-making mechanism within the Council is consistent with the interests of Germany, the most populous EU country. It is also consistent with the French interest, according to which nothing should be possible within the EU without France. The object of the new arrangement, in addition to other assumptions, such as democratisation, simplification, etc., is to secure the leading political role of France and Germany in an enlarged EU and to create new conditions for these two states in a new Union<sup>22</sup>. '[T]he larger Member States will find it easier to form majority coalitions with smaller and medium-sized Member States under the new rules of the draft Constitution'<sup>23</sup>, which means consent to a more polycentric formula of European integration, in which the two strongest states: France and Germany are actually able to participate in the largest number of potential majority coalitions. 'From the old Member States' point of view, one particularly interesting result of the draft Constitution is that the EU Fifteen would continue to command a necessary majority [15 states + 78 per cent of the population of an EU of 27 states], which under the Nice

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<sup>20</sup> Henri de Bresson, *Nowe Niemcy* (A New Germany), transl. Wiktor Dłuski, Warsaw 2003, p. 223.

<sup>21</sup> *Reforma dotknie wszystkich* (All Will Be Affected by the Reform), Rzeczpospolita 7.06.2003.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jacek Rostowski, *Umierać za Niceę? Tak, ale inteligentnie!* (To Die for Nice? Yes, but Intelligently!), Rzeczpospolita 1.10.2003.

<sup>23</sup> Janis A. Emmanouilidis, Thomas Fischer, *The New Voting Regulations for a Double Majority in the Council*, CAP/Fundacja Bertelsmanna 2003, p.2.

regulations they would have lost in an EU of 27 due to an insufficient number of weighted votes'<sup>24</sup>. In view of the forthcoming EU enlargement, the proposal for changes in the decision-making process within the Council has very far-reaching consequences, as it represents an attempt to conserve the present balance of political power of the old Union in a new, enlarged Union. This attempt is all the more controversial that, objectively speaking, the conservation of the old balance of power is not possible in an enlarged Union of 25 states except at the expense of small and medium-sized states, including those already belonging to the EU. Smaller states without ambitions to play a leading role within the EU could probably agree to pay such a price, if the large states were ready to guarantee them financial and political support<sup>25</sup>. Actually, the idea behind the proposed changes to the decision-making method in the Council is that France and Germany should and want to represent the other EU member states and to speak on their behalf. Apart from the wish to take the Americans down a peg or two, this intention was expressed in the Franco-German declaration of April 2003 on their will to establish a Defence Union. The belief that France and Germany should and can speak on behalf of Europe as a whole follows not only from the fact--which is obvious and should be respected by all the other EU members, old and new--that these two countries actually initiated the European integration process, but, even more importantly, from the belief of the French and German politicians in the ability of the two states to fulfil such a leadership role within the EU. Paradoxically, the Iraq crisis only served to strengthen this belief. Meanwhile, the attempt to conserve the present balance of power within the EU, of which France and Germany should remain the core, may prove to be unrealistic for one basic reason: that those willing to lead the EU politically do not have that much to offer to those they would like to lead. In other words, the Franco-German tandem may turn out to be not so attractive for the other countries. Firstly, Germany is no longer ready to bear the most of the financial responsibility for EU integration, particularly faced with its own increasing economic problems. Secondly, EU enlargement clearly pushes France aside to defensive positions, while the German policy potentially gains, now at

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> 'As William Riker (1964) has suggested, large states can only lead within integration processes if they are able to offer protection to smaller countries.', Thomas Pedersen, *Recent Trends in the Franco-German Relationship*, JCMS 2003 Volume 41. Annual Review, p. 24.

least, a space for looking for new allies in Britain as well as in Central and Eastern Europe. Thirdly and finally, on issues of the common defence and foreign policies both countries clearly have very little to offer to the others<sup>26</sup>.

Regardless of all the positive consequences the member states may have imagined, EU enlargement to the east has also been viewed as an element energizing and diversifying the ongoing integration process, and therefore seen in terms of increasing political risk one has to take precautions against if the deepening of integration were still to be given any serious consideration. This way of thinking about enlargement certainly characterizes the French European policy and, to a certain extent, also the German policy. At least some of the provisions of the draft European Constitution were intended as precautions against that increased risk involved in the admission of the ten new states to the EU, and as a chance to block the possible formation of new political constellations within the EU. It seemed that that new process could be kept under control, to a degree at least<sup>27</sup>. What continues to be the main object from the French point of view is to retain the 'controlling interest' in the EU, for which a special relationship with Germany is necessary. Without Germany, France in fact ceases to play a key role in the EU. What seems crucial to Germany is to secure a pivotal position in an enlarged EU to reflect the political, economic and population potential of that reunited state at the heart of Europe.

What nobody had predicted in these calculations, reflected to some extent in the draft Constitutional Treaty, was the emergence of a completely new element that animated and diversified the situation in Europe even further: the American intervention in Iraq. In particular, the fact that some of the EU member states and some of the acceding states sided with the US seriously called into question the French and German calculations and objectives related to an enlarged Union of 25 states<sup>28</sup>. The letter from eight European leaders must have made the politicians in Paris and Berlin realise that the threat of a

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> The awareness that upon enlargement it will be possible to control the situation within the Union only to a certain degree is suggested for example in Schroeder's statement for Le Monde (24 January 2003), in which he asserts that 'the Franco-German friendship can no longer be an aim in itself. It needs to be redefined and tested all the time. In the future, we should be more of inspirers of integration than the driving force behind it.'

<sup>28</sup> On the relation between the war on Iraq and provisions in the draft Constitutional Treaty benefiting Germany and France, see *Nie bójmy się weta* (Let Us Not Be Afraid of a Veto), an interview with Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30.09.2003.

new political constellation in Europe, resulting from the coincidence of these two developments: EU enlargement and the intervention in Iraq, is more real than they had believed so far. France and Germany reacted characteristically to that threat: by closing the ranks and resuming the speculations on the hard core, notably in the area of the common foreign and security policy<sup>29</sup>.

### **Poland: the Fourth Element?**

Poland's siding with the US on the issue of the intervention in Iraq, participation in the military operation against Saddam Hussein and, lastly, assuming command over its own stabilization sector in post-war Iraq: these developments provoked surprise, consternation, bitterness and, finally, anger among the politicians and public opinion in France and Germany. President Chirac's statement was the one to have the furthest-reaching repercussions<sup>30</sup>. Aside from the immoderate opinions, what became the actual problem, particularly in Germany, was the need to understand the motives and reasons behind the standpoint of Poland<sup>31</sup>, the country that definitely went the furthest, after Britain, from among the states of the EU area in supporting the US policy, and to explain the situation as a result of which Poland and France and Germany found themselves poles apart, or, as Robert Kagan put it, on two different planets<sup>32</sup>.

Even today, the Germans find it extremely difficult to understand Poland's policy. However, besides the standard opinions on Polish blind pro-Americanism, and the Polish Trojan donkey, appeals have also been made to take the Polish standpoint seriously, and to draw conclusions to possibly modify the categorical German opposition to Bush's policy in Iraq<sup>33</sup>. This is due to the fact that opinions on Germany's position on the US policy as defined in the National Security Strategy of October 2002 have from the very beginning been much more divided than merely skimming through the German newspapers might suggest<sup>34</sup>. The dominant motive in the German attempts to explain

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<sup>29</sup> A joint Declaration by Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium on the European Security and Defence Policy of 29 April 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Christian Wernicke, *Verärgerung über Position der Beitrittskandidaten im Irak-Konflikt*, SZ, 19.02.2003, Tony Blankley, *France blackmails Poland*, The Washington Times, 19.02.2003.

<sup>31</sup> Andreas Kossert, *Noch ist Polen nicht verstanden*, Die Zeit, 4.09.2003.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Kagan, *Potęga i raj* (Power and Paradise), transl. Witold Turopolski, EMKA, Warsaw 2003, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Schuster, *Von Polen lernen*, Die Welt, 5.05.2003, Michael Ludwig, *Ein Team für Europa*, FAZ 12.05.2003, Jackson Janes, *Deutschland braucht jetzt eine Strategie*, SZ, 9.09.2003.

<sup>34</sup> Joachim Krause/Jan Irlenkaeuser/Benjamin Scheer, *Wohin gehen die USA? Die neue Nationale Sicherheitsstrategie der Bush-Administration*, 'Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte' B 48/2002.

the Polish attitude towards the intervention in Iraq has been the issue of Poland's newly regained sovereignty. It is highly symptomatic that this explanation has been offered by people holding completely different views on Europe, such as Jürgen Habermas and Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde. For Habermas, suspicious of Germany's eastern neighbour, Poland's position on America and the war in Iraq proves that 'although Central and Eastern European countries do seek EU membership, they are not yet ready to limit their newly regained sovereignty'<sup>35</sup>. According to Böckenförde, who is definitely more friendly towards Poland, 'for the nations of Eastern Europe, their history of freedom is oriented, in the first place, towards independence and sovereignty following their liberation from the Eastern bloc empire. Therefore, they need to be cherished and preserved. Fitting into some new order, as for example in the politically organised Europe, is not in the foreground. This is reflected in the option represented by Poland and the Czech Republic in recent times: in favour of the United States and against the two main European powers. It is the United States, rather than Europe, that they tend to regard as their security guarantee'<sup>36</sup>. This does not seem to be the correct diagnosis, however, as the very attitude of the Polish people towards their own state sovereignty appears to be much more complex, and so it is difficult to make it the main argument revealing the true motives underlying Polish policy. For if the point were actually to preserve the 'newly regained sovereignty', why did Poland so willingly subordinate itself to US policy?

Indeed, if we take as a starting point the main processes in the formation of the world order, the Polish attitude seems paradoxical and incomprehensible. It does not fit into any of the scenarios of the emergence of a new post-national order predicted and discussed in the West: in this sense, it may be regarded as an outside-the-system decision. Let us assume that we accept Carl Schmitt's theory that since the Second World War the international order has increasingly been based not on independent nation states, but on the 'large areas' emerging in the contemporary world (Grossraumtheorie)<sup>37</sup>, and the complementary theory of Alexander Kojève and A.J. Toynbee on the new type of supranational 'empires' (in the first, cold war phase, the

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<sup>35</sup> Habermas, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, *Grundlagen europäischer Solidarität*, FAZ, 20.06.2003.

<sup>37</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht de Jus Publicum Europeum*, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 1950.

bipolar system of two empires: the Soviet and the American ones, and in the second phase after 1990, an asymmetrical system of the American empire, with the Franco-German Latin empire seeking to provide counterbalance, i.e. what Jacques Delors and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing often refer to today as Europe-Power)<sup>38</sup>. From this point of view, Poland made a decision going against the main trends, in terms of its consequences: it is a high-risk game that may bring large benefits, but also, in the case of defeat, Poland may pay a high price for its decisions going against the main consolidation processes. Instead of joining, without any major reservations, into the Franco-German Latin empire after finally liberating itself from the Soviet imperial influence, practically ever since 1989 Poland has been seeking to establish a special relationship with the United States, the culminating moment of which was undoubtedly the decision to send Polish troops to Iraq and to take command over the Polish stabilisation sector there. One may say that this clear trend in Polish policy, regarded by some European countries as evident pro-Americanism, is the realisation of a certain vision outlined in 1950 by Oscar Halecki, a vision of an Atlantic community<sup>39</sup>. Its underlying assumption was the belief (contrary to the diagnoses of Schmitt, Kojève or Toynbee, announced about the same time, immediately after the war) in the inevitable marginalisation of Western, Latin Europe: a trend that the European countries were unable to counterbalance except with America's support. Perhaps, then, Polish policy is a specific revitalisation of that idea in new circumstances, but based on the same assumptions, most importantly on the same lack of faith in the capacity of Europe, centred around France and Germany, to establish itself as a competitive actor in world politics. This revitalisation is certainly encouraged by what may be regarded as an actual similarity between the American and the Polish views of the world<sup>40</sup>, or, more broadly speaking, the Polish and the American mentality: whether in security, social policy or the

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<sup>38</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Esquisse d'une doctrine de la politique française (1945)*, 'La Règle de jeu', No 1, May 1990, Paris, and A.J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, New York-London 1947. The 1990s debate between Samuel Huntington and Fukuyama is in fact the aftermath of Schmitt's, Kojève's and Toynbee's views from the 1940s and 1950s.

<sup>39</sup> Oscar Halecki, *Historia Europy (A History of Europe, 1950)*, Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, Lublin 2000.

<sup>40</sup> David H. Dunn ascertains 'the complementarity of strategic interests and worldview that exists between the two states'. 'There are no major areas of disagreement. Even on social issues, an area that often divides America from its European allies, socially conservative Poland is often at one with the US.', *America's New Model Ally*, in: *Poland – A New Power in Transatlantic Security*, Frank Cass, London 2003.



economy<sup>41</sup>. A similarity, incidentally, that goes back quite a long time. For it is worth recalling in this contemporary context that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, officers of the Polish army, dissolved after the partitions of Poland, such as Kazimierz Pułaski and Tadeusz Kościuszko, did not choose to go to the geographically close France to defend the French Revolution there, but to the distant United States to defend the achievements of the American Revolution, and it is there that they have their monuments.

In reality, this similarity between the Polish and the American mentality is probably more complex than the generalisations proposed by some external and internal observers would suggest. For while surveys indeed show similarities of opinion between the United States and Britain, or even the Netherlands, as regards their approach to the methods of solving of international problems and understanding the principal threats to world security, it is not so evident in the case of Polish public opinion<sup>42</sup>. It is worth recalling that Poland's political decision to join the American anti-Hussein coalition did not enjoy unequivocal support of Polish public opinion. One can safely assume, therefore, that its underlying motive was only in part 'the pro-American impulse', as some critics of Polish policy would have it<sup>43</sup>. It was, maybe even to a greater degree, the political calculation of a country in search of its place in world politics to guarantee its maximum security. What has probably influenced this kind of calculation is the actual lack of any concrete political offer for the new members on the part of the old EU members, which only adds to the lack of faith of the former in the EU's political powers. As the Berlin correspondent of The Times aptly described the situation: 'Little wonder that the relationship between the US and Eastern Europe is growing so quickly: Washington, even on the cusp of a Middle East war, is offering encouragement and a firmly defined strategic role of these neglected countries. Brussels, by contrast, is offering at best a second-class status to

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<sup>41</sup> Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Konflikt w świecie zachodnim. Federalizm amerykański jako model globalnego porządku* (Conflict in the Western World. American Federalism as a Model of Global Order), Arcana 50 (2/2003), p. 9-10.

<sup>42</sup> On the basis of a German Marshall Fund survey, three basic approaches to global security issues have been identified: those known as 'hawks', i.e. advocates of the hard, military line; pragmatists, supporting tough solutions, but in cooperation with international institutions and within the limits of international law, and those known as 'doves', opposed to violent solutions. According to this survey, in the USA we have 22% of hawks, 65% of pragmatists and 10% of doves; in the UK 14%, 63%, and 19%; in the Netherlands 10%, 50%, and 32%; in Poland 6%, 47%, and 41%; in France 6%, 34%, and 49%; and in Germany 4%, 35% and 52%, respectively. Transatlantic Trends 2003, German Marshall Fund.

<sup>43</sup> Zdzisław Najder, *Bez międzynarodowej solidarności* (Without International Solidarity), Rzeczpospolita 9.09.2003.

the East'<sup>44</sup>. It seems, therefore, that Poland's stance on Iraq may be more understandable than some commentators occasionally try to present it, if viewed through the prism of potential benefits to be gained as a result of the qualitatively completely new situation.

This political calculation of possible benefits may be based on two basic assumptions: firstly, the consolidation of Poland's position in the transatlantic configuration as a springboard for activities on a wider than regional scale, and ushering Poland out of post-Soviet parochialism. Secondly, securing a better position within the European Union than Poland's structural and economic potential alone would warrant to enable Poland effective pursuit of its policy within the France-Germany-Britain configuration.

In the first case, the point is, therefore, to build a more permanent strategy of alliance with the United States, based on something more than short-term interests: on a solid foundation of political and technological cooperation within the framework of a Polish-American military agreement. As Radosław Sikorski observed: 'It is in our interest to ensure that future US bases on the territories of the new NATO members are centres of genuine military cooperation rather than mere arms stockpiles, that our firms are commissioned with constructing and supplying them, and that Poland reserves the veto right as regards the ways the troops deployed there may be used'<sup>45</sup>. The political object of this strategy of strengthening our relationship with America should be to secure a stable position in the hierarchy of US allies, after countries such as Britain and Israel<sup>46</sup> (and Germany). And its structural object should be to use the activities under this cooperation to energize the logistic and technological modernisation of the Polish armed forces and those segments of the Polish state responsible for organising its external and domestic security. A side effect of this enhanced cooperation, and yet an extremely important one in psychological terms, should be the abolition of visa regime for Polish nationals entering the United States.

In the second case, the potential benefits concern the working out of some *modus operandi*, more in the spirit of partnership, between Poland as a new EU member and the present member states, notably Germany, France and Britain. Poland's European

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<sup>44</sup> *The EU is the last thing many of these nations need*, TimesOnline, 11.12.2002.

<sup>45</sup> Radek Sikorski, *Zmarnowana szansa?* (A Wasted Opportunity?), Rzeczpospolita 13-14.09.2003.

<sup>46</sup> David H. Dunn, op. cit., p. 82.

policy is characteristic of a country whose ambitions and potential are considerably greater than its structural capacity for achieving the ambitious goals it has set itself. It is here that the Polish dilemmas mostly come from as to what kind of position to accept within the European Union as its new member, whether to play a weak or a strong, a small or a large state. This determines the future character of Poland's European policy within the EU as a multi-track, flexible policy, compensating its own structural weakness vis-à-vis the strong EU member states by a special relationship with the United States. However, such policy must not lead to a consolidation of the division into 'the old and the new Europe'. The object of securing a strategically better position by Poland vis-à-vis the other EU countries must be to create a situation in which any major common foreign, security and defence policy project would be unthinkable without the involvement of Britain, France, Germany and Poland<sup>47</sup>. The point is, thus, to bring about a qualitative political change, the necessity of which, in the context of EU enlargement and the war in Iraq, was acknowledged by Richard von Weizsäcker suggesting an alliance between the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Poland to strengthen the European foreign policy. The change goes far beyond the proposals for a European core formulated so far. 'We must take care ourselves to make our foreign policy reasonable, and our security policy credible. London, Paris and Berlin must set an example together. Together with Warsaw, we may form a "club of four", open to all', said the former German president in an interview for Der Spiegel weekly<sup>48</sup>.

In other words, the consolidation of Poland's position in the transatlantic configuration through a special relationship with the United States must not be an aim in itself but, for the time being at least, a necessary means to achieve the fundamental objective: a change in the balance of power within the European Union upon enlargement, and preventing the scenario of the Franco-German core from being realised.

### **A Renewed Europe**

In the Polish debate, the opponents of the Polish involvement in Iraq often point to the danger of Poland's foreign policy being completely blocked, which would make it

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<sup>47</sup> Such an opinion appeared in Germany already in connection with the joint Declaration of Germany, France and Benelux of 29. April 2003.

<sup>48</sup> After PAP, 12.08.2003: Niemcy/Były prezydent RFN proponuje sojusz (Germany/Former German president proposes an alliance).

impossible to pursue other objectives of crucial importance to our country, most importantly Polish Eastern policy. This does not have to happen, provided that Poland is able to maintain proper proportions between its transatlantic and European policies, reflecting the relationship between a means and an objective. Unlike in the Middle East, what Polish policy needs in Eastern Europe, are, in the first place, what are called 'soft' confidence-building measures. The idea of building such measures is what Poland should promote in debates on the sense of the future European foreign, defence and security policies. The influence on these policies depends upon the degree of involvement in global politics, and on readiness to participate in the shaping of the new EU foreign, security and defence policy structures. This is the road that Tony Blair's policy is now following. Poland's policy should follow a similar road, for this is the way to broaden the political foundation of integration established by France and Germany, and towards a genuine renewal of the EU upon enlargement. For a Union of 25-27 states does in fact need more flexibility, not so much in its structures or institutions as in its mentality. For unless EU enlargement results in an expansion of its political core within the next few years, it may turn out that just as French and German policy initiated European integration back in the 1950s, so today, French and German policy may spell its end.

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